

Strategy 1 – Conduct Education and Awareness Campaigns to Increase Younger Drivers’ Awareness of the Risks of Driver Distractions

General Description

It is estimated that 1.5 – 3.0 million (AAA) crashes occur annually as a result of distracted drivers, and NHTSA data shows that drivers aged 16 – 20 are four times as likely to be involved in a distraction related crash. In 2002, North Carolina experienced 21,082 distraction related crashes with 263 of them being fatal crashes, and drivers aged 16-21 accounted for 14% of the total. In 2000, almost 14% of North Carolina’s population was between the ages of 10 and 19 with the majority of this age group at the driving age or eligible to enroll in driver’s education classes.

This strategy focuses on educating young drivers and teens who are approaching the driving age of the risks involved with distracted driving with a public relations campaign. A public relations campaign is generally more effective than advertising and this campaign may include news stories, press releases, special events, educational materials, websites, use of the internet, focus groups, promotional materials, and public service announcements, which all provide a longer lasting value.

The intent is to target teens with a long-term, multi-faceted educational program to make them aware of the dangers involved in distracted driving and to eventually make it as socially unacceptable as drinking and driving.

Technical Attributes

Target	<p>The primary target population for this strategy is young drivers and teens that are approaching the driving age. (13-18-years-old) It is easier to stop a habit before it starts, so the idea is to change driver behavior by making distracted driving socially unacceptable; by starting with a new generation of drivers, there should be no preprogrammed habits to break.</p> <p>Our secondary audience will include parents of the target population, coaches, teachers and specifically driver’s education teachers who interact with teenagers on a regular basis.</p>
Expected Effectiveness	<p>It is always difficult to measure the effectiveness of an educational program geared toward changing driver behavior. This strategy is no different; especially since the target audience is only a fraction of the driving population. Due to the nature of this strategy, it will take time for the results to be visible. However, as the campaign progresses, we expect to see a reduction in distracted driver related crashes among this age group.</p>
Keys to Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign must be multi-faceted and long term • Parent involvement • Must recognize the characteristics of this age group (known as “echo boomers,” and construct/target the messages accordingly • Make effort to utilize low cost avenues, such as the Internet • Awareness, partnerships, and action between government and private sector. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Possible agencies include: DMV, NCDOT, N.C. High School Athletic Association, Mothers/Students Against Drunk Driving, Church Youth Groups, N.C. Public Schools, Public Relations Student Society university chapters, Department of Public Instruction, AAA Carolinas, and the NC division of FHWA. • Specific partnership with Drivers Education programs.

Keys to Success (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement/participation of a teen focus group to identify messages and advise on methods of dissemination • Need to establish a positive campaign message • Possible Teen Spokesperson • Bilingual • Public Affairs Offices of relevant agencies must work together to ensure a consistent and coordinated campaign
Potential Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The difficulty in measuring the successfulness of this program in terms of hard numbers may impair the amount of buy in • The target audience may not be receptive • Relevancy to difficult audience • Competition with other programs/information overload (click it or ticket & you booze, you lose) • Measurement of effectiveness of public relations campaign (earned media value, dollar value of publicity/coverage the campaign gets)
Appropriate Measures and Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the proportion of target audience members' awareness of campaign through surveys. • Number of students attending a presentation (if this is selected as one of the facets) • Future numbers of distraction related crashes compared to "before" and "control" groups. • Number of visits to informational websites • Number of students who have graduated from an improved driver's education program that includes distracted driving in the curriculum. • Annual cost of related crashes vs. annual cost of campaign
Associated Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Organizational, Institutional, and Policy Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships with the Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Motor Vehicles to improve education and testing process.
Issues Affecting Implementation Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope size – a multi-faceted campaigns require much planning and coordination • Agencies given the task of developing messages, planning the campaign, and coordinating/implementing the campaign must fit this activity into already busy schedules. • One positive is that there are a lot of smaller programs that focus on improving driver behavior. It would be fairly easy to adopt appropriate sections of these programs into our own – wouldn't be reinventing the wheel. However, getting permission from other agencies and customizing these programs to fit our need will take time.
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups costs (minimal) • Fliers/Brochures • Person-hours for presentations to schools • Person-hours for crafting messages • Personnel costs to hosting agency • Possible advertising costs to reinforce the campaign in the future • Media promotional costs • Other marketing costs
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Legislative Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None